

Opportunity Oregon - 2025 Impact



opportunity oregon

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Letter from the Executive Director

Returning citizens need support and advocacy to rebuild their lives and reenter the workforce. Too often, people leave prison ready to work but face barriers that prevent success. While corrections provide pre-release support, peer-aligned guidance rooted in lived experience fills a gap systems alone cannot.

I know this personally. When I returned home, no one would hire me. That challenge led me to pursue a business degree and become a gym owner, where I learned what employers truly need: reliability, soft skills, accountability, and retention. Those lessons, combined with lived experience, guide our work every day.

At the end of 2023, we began designing the first collaborative career fair in partnership with members of the 7th Step Foundation, an enrichment club led by currently incarcerated individuals at Oregon State Penitentiary. This initiative became the blueprint for future career fairs across Oregon's prisons. Together, we shaped events that addressed real needs inside the facilities. With support from Oregon Department of Corrections staff and administration per facility, Oregon Corrections Enterprises, WorkSource Oregon, employers, unions, workforce partners, and community organizations, we expanded this model statewide. By the end of 2025, we completed 11 career fairs, including eight in 2025 alone, engaging more than 3,000 incarcerated individuals through reentry workshops and career fairs that year.

A transformative aspect of this work has been bringing employers and unions directly into the facilities. Industry leaders now see firsthand how skills, certifications, and training inside align with workforce needs. These experiences challenge assumptions, build trust, and open doors to second-chance employment opportunities that might not have existed otherwise.

The economic impact is significant. Each person who successfully reintegrates saves taxpayers roughly \$79,000 per year and contributes back into the economy, while strengthening families, reducing poverty, and increasing public safety. Beyond dollars, these outcomes send a powerful message to those still inside: change is possible, and opportunity exists.

Looking ahead to 2026, we have more events planned, deeper partnerships forming, and growing momentum across the state. What began as a local effort is evolving into a scalable model with the potential for national impact.

This work is not about one person or one organization. It is about building bridges that move people from incarceration to opportunity, from isolation to belonging, and from reactive systems to ones that prepare. Together, we are just getting started. As I always say, **"When it comes to reentry, it's never about competition - it's about collaboration...and more lives are transformed."**



Nancy Pence
Executive Director/Cofounder
E: info@opport-unity.org

Our Organization

Opportunity Oregon was founded in Lane County in 2021 by siblings Nancy Pance and Joseph Carmack, rooted in lived experience and a shared commitment to second chances. What began as a local effort to support justice-involved individuals has grown into a statewide organization serving applicants across all Oregon state prisons. Today, Opportunity Oregon serves as a centralized portal that connects incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals to fair chance employment, reentry providers, critical resources, and state agencies, delivering wraparound support to applicants no matter where they live in Oregon. Through a growing network of committed employers and partners, Opportunity Oregon works to create pathways to stability, dignity, and long-term success.

Mission

Our mission is to find employment for justice-involved individuals through prison outreach, employer education, and business development services.

Vision

Employers, corrections, the communities across Oregon and justice-involved individuals are united in breaking the cycle of recidivism. All formerly incarcerated find quality and sustainable careers.

Values

At Opportunity Oregon, our core values are the guiding principles that shape our culture and drive our mission. These beliefs act as our compass, influencing how we work together and interact with our community.

Partnership - Collaborating with community partners to achieve our shared mission.

Perseverance - Pursuing new opportunities even in the face of adversity.

Integrity - Always doing what is ethically right.

Inclusion - Including those who have historically been excluded and ensuring that all identity groups have the same rights, opportunities, and access regardless of their background or circumstance.

Transparency - Sharing information openly and honestly, both internally and externally.

Meet Our Team



Nancy Pance, Executive Director



Aubrey Johnson, Deputy Director



Michelle Ehlers, Reentry Specialist

Meet Our Board of Directors



Jessica McEwen, President



Tessa Kristiansen, Vice President



Cory Adair, Treasurer

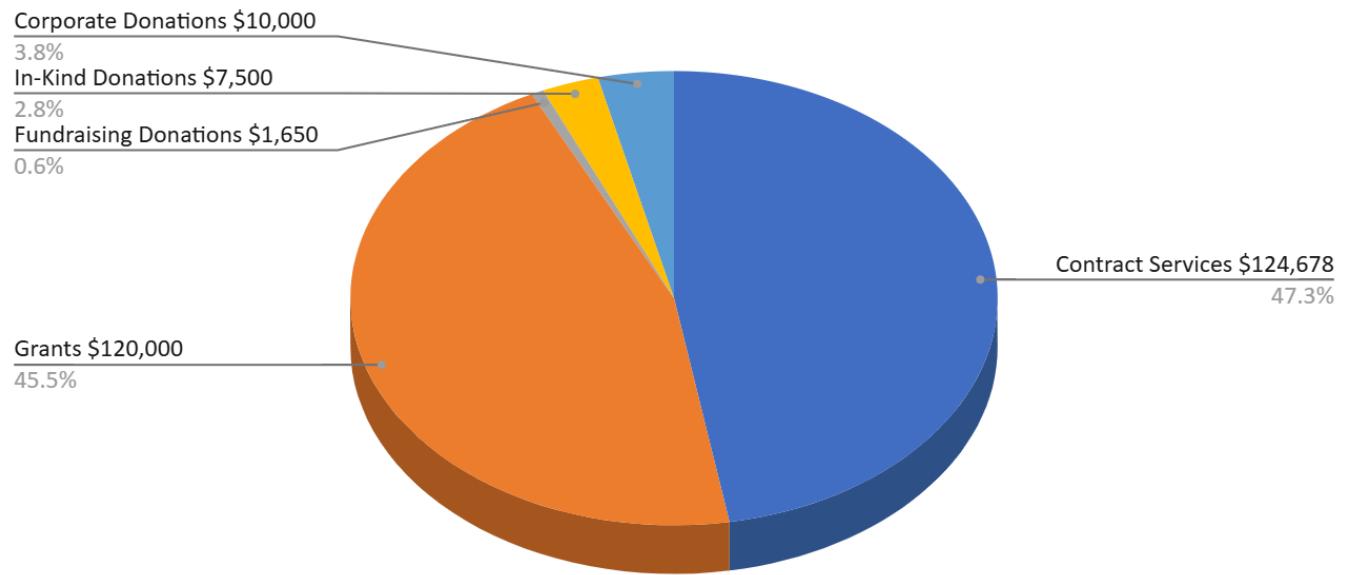


Anna Fiedler, Secretary



Joseph Carmack, Board Member

Financials



In 2025, Opportunity Oregon garnered substantial community investment from various public, private, and philanthropic partners throughout Oregon, demonstrating strong support for our mission. Key contributions included:

- **Lane Workforce Partnership:** Contracted Opportunity Oregon as the Community-Based Case Manager for individuals enrolled in the Pathway Home program released to Lane County.
- **Eastern Oregon Workforce Board:** Engaged Opportunity Oregon to provide workforce development services, focusing on hiring justice-involved individuals and conducting outreach workshops and career fairs in four eastern Oregon prisons.
- **Higher Education Coordinating Commission:** Awarded a Strategic Innovation Grant to provide services to clients; conduct quarterly outreach workshops; employer outreach and education; and career and resource fairs within the Oregon state prison system.
- **Spirit Mountain Casino Fund:** Funded physical office space in Springfield, Oregon for client services and staff.
- **Union Pacific Community Fund:** Provided grant funding for travel and wages to facilitate career and resource fairs in prisons statewide.
- **Pelican Garage Doors:** Sponsored bicycles, locks, and helmets for program participants to commute to work.
- **Lane Community Economic and Development:** Awarded grant funding to support employment for justice-involved individuals in Lane County and promote fair-chance hiring practices.

- **OnPoint Community Credit Union and Oregon Community Foundation:** Contributed towards livable wages to sustain our operations.

A special thank you to individual donor Dawn Tyree for her unwavering support in bringing hope and workforce development to our community.

2025 Donors

Thank you to all our donors. Your unwavering support has been instrumental in advancing our mission and creating meaningful change in the lives of justice-involved individuals and the communities where they live and work .

- Aubrey Johnson
- Dawn Tyree
- Eastern Oregon Workforce Board
- Higher Education Coordinating Commission
- Lane County Community Economic and Development Grant
- Lane Workforce Partnership
- OnPoint Community Credit Union
- Oregon Community Foundation
- Pelican Garage Doors
- Spirit Mountain Community Fund, Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde
- Steve Homeier
- Trillium Community Health Plan
- Union Pacific Railroad, Community Ties Giving Program



2025 Strategic & Community Partners

- Adult & Teen Challenge PacWest
- Allstar Staffing
- Boilermakers Local 104
- Cement Masons Local 555
- Changing Patterns Inc.
- Chemeketa Community College
- Clackamas Community College
- Clackamas Workforce Partnership, Clean Slate
- Community Action Reentry Services
- De Muniz Resource Center Reentry
- Constructing Hope
- Collaborative Economic Development Oregon
- East Cascade Works
- Eastern Oregon Workforce Board
- Elevate Him
- Emergence Addiction & Behavioral Therapies
- Freedom Farms
- Golden Rule Reentry
- Goodwill Industries
- Higher Education Coordinating Commission
- International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 48 & 280
- Inside Out Network
- International Association of Machinists & Aerospace Workers Local 63
- International Union of Elevator Constructors Local 23

- Ironworkers Local 29
- Laborers Union Local 737
- Lifeways Recovery Center
- Miracles Club
- NW20 College of Construction
- Oregon Corrections Enterprises
- Oregon Department of Corrections
- Oregon Department of Human Services, Vocational Rehabilitation
- Oregon Employment & Training Association
- Oregon Human Development Corporation
- Oregon Restaurant & Lodging Association
- Oregon Re-Entry Coalition
- Oregon Tradeswomen
- Oregon Workforce Partnership
- Oregon Youth Authority
- Oxford Housing
- Painters Union Local 10
- Provoking Hope Reentry
- Richardson Media
- ReGroup, Transformative Justice Community
- Restored Connections Peer Center
- Society for Human Resource Management, Portland Chapter
- Sheet Metal Union Local 16
- Sponsors, Inc.
- Sprinkler Fitters Union JATC 669
- Training & Employment Consortium
- Union Pacific Railroad
- Union Roofers Local 49
- University of Oregon
- Urban Alchemy
- Western Carpenters Union Local
- WorkSource Oregon
- 211.org
- 7th Step Foundation, Oregon State Penitentiary

2025 Strategic Plan & Outcomes

In 2025, we made significant strides in our mission to support justice-involved individuals on their journeys toward employment and reintegration. Together, we successfully placed 150 program participants into meaningful jobs, each placement representing a renewed sense of hope and opportunity.

Our efforts extended beyond individual placements; we engaged 125 new businesses across the state of Oregon that are committed to hiring justice-involved individuals. This growing acceptance within the workforce signifies a transformative shift in perception, highlighting the potential and value that these individuals bring to their communities.

Through 40 in-prison outreach workshops, we reached 1,138 adults in custody, fostering awareness and instilling hope that there are community employers ready to invest in their skills and future. These workshops not only enhance job readiness but also empower participants to envision a brighter tomorrow.

Opportunity Oregon organized and hosted, in collaboration with the Oregon Department of Corrections and Oregon Corrections Enterprises, eight career and resource fairs within the prison system, where 2,160 participants from the adult custody population explored new pathways to success. These impactful events attracted 211 outside employers, trade unions, and service

provider organizations, along with 347 community guests, exemplifying a powerful collaborative effort to support reintegration and dismantle barriers.

As we reflect on these achievements, it is clear that together, we are creating lasting change and opening doors for justice-involved individuals to reclaim their lives and contribute positively to society. Your support makes this vital work possible, and we look forward to continuing this journey together.

Programs & Services

To effectively support justice-involved individuals on their journey to successful reintegration, we have developed a range of targeted programs designed to bridge the gap between potential employers and those seeking a fair chance. These initiatives include Employer Outreach and Engagement, Business Development Services, In-Prison Workshops, and In-Prison Career and Resource Fairs, each aimed at creating meaningful connections and opportunities for growth.

Employer Outreach and Engagement

We build and sustain relationships with employers to increase understanding of the benefits of hiring justice-involved individuals. Through targeted outreach and education, we demonstrate the value of fair chance hiring by sharing data, employer success stories, and available tax incentives. This approach helps employers recognize the business case for expanding their talent pool while advancing equitable workforce practices.



Business Development Services

We partner with employers committed to hiring justice-involved individuals by providing customized business development support. Our team carefully vets candidates based on employer-defined criteria, including work skills, soft skills, certifications, licenses, and background considerations. We introduce prospective employees only after identifying strong alignment through our application process and the trusted relationships we build with the returning citizens we serve. This approach reduces barriers for both employers and job seekers and supports successful, long-term placements.



In-Prison Workshops



Our in-person, peer-aligned reentry workshops use a streamlined application process to connect incarcerated individuals with post-release employment opportunities and essential reentry resources. This application now functions as a statewide portal, linking participants to employment support and partner service providers upon release.

Through these workshops and follow-up correspondence, we share current union and employment information and provide real-time industry guidance to prepare individuals for the outside workforce. After release, we continue to support participants with resume development and job search assistance until they secure gainful employment, recognizing that every job placement is a milestone worth celebrating.

In-Prison Career and Resource Fairs

We recruit, plan, and host career and resource fairs within correctional facilities to connect employers, labor unions, and reentry service providers with the incarcerated workforce. These events give employers direct insight into in-prison trades and vocational training programs, as well as the individuals developing these skills.



By bringing the outside workforce into the facilities, the fairs create meaningful connections that open doors to future career pathways. This approach provides hope and opportunity for skilled individuals preparing for reentry while strengthening connections between employers and a ready workforce.

Program Success Metrics

The following metrics highlight the scope and impact of our work in 2025.

Key Performance Metrics	Definition	Annual Impact
Career Placements	The number of program participants hired	150
Business Development	The number of new businesses committed to hiring justice involved individuals	125
In-Prison Outreach Workshops	The number of in prison workshops conducted	40
In-Prison Outreach Workshop Participants	The number of adults in custody that participated in an outreach prison workshops	1,138
Career & Resource Fairs	The number of prison career fairs conducted inside	8
Career & Resource Fair AIC Participants	The number of adults in custody that participated in the career and resource fairs.	2,160
Career & Resource Fair Outside Employer, Resource Provider Participants	The number of outside employers, trade unions, service provider organizations that attended career and resource fairs.	211
Career & Resource Fair Community Guest Participants	The number of outside employer, trade union, service provider organization representatives that attended career and resource fairs.	347

2026 Strategic Plan and Impact

At Opportunity Oregon, 2026 is focused on expanding horizons both inside and outside prison walls. Our goal is to reach more than 3,000 incarcerated individuals in person, connecting them with career workshops, education, and essential reentry services that pave the way for lasting success.

This year, we are hosting nine in-prison career fairs, making it our busiest year yet, along with 40 reentry workshops, many of which will feature reentry partners and employers as special guests. These events create invaluable connections and open doors to meaningful opportunities.

We are also committed to growing our network by adding 120 new employers and unions to our statewide database and helping at least 150 individuals secure gainful employment through outreach, partnerships, and direct engagement with employers inside correctional facilities. Every connection we make transforms futures and strengthens communities.

Of course, achieving this vision requires continued investment in organizational capacity. Additional office support would allow us to keep pace with the growing number of returning citizens seeking guidance and employment, while also expanding our presence inside correctional facilities through additional workshops, career fairs, and employer connections. In the meantime, we will continue to leverage volunteers and interns to advance our mission forward.

By connecting incarcerated and returning citizens with employers, education, and supportive services, Opportunity Oregon is creating a pipeline for success that ensures every individual has the tools, guidance, and opportunities needed to build a better future.



2026 Key Performance Metric Goals

Key Performance Metrics	Definition	Annual Goal
Career Placements	The number of program participants hired	150
Business Development	The number of new businesses committed to hiring justice involved individuals	120
In-Prison Outreach Workshops	The number of in prison workshops conducted	40
In-Prison Outreach Workshop Participants	The number of adults in custody that participated in an outreach prison workshops	1,300
Career Fairs	The number of prison career fairs conducted inside	9
Career & Resource Fair AIC Participants	The number of adults in custody that participated in the career and resource fairs.	2,500
Career & Resource Fair Outside Employer, Resource Provider Participants	The number of outside employers, trade unions, service provider organizations that attended career and resource fairs.	240
Career & Resource Fair Community Guest Participants	The number of outside employer, trade union, service provider organization representatives that attended career and resource fairs.	380



2026 Career and Resource Fairs

In 2026, Opportunity Oregon will host and coordinate nine career and resource fairs across the Oregon prison system, in partnership and collaboration with the Oregon Department of Corrections and Oregon Corrections Enterprises.

Career and Resource Fair Schedule 2026	
Location	Date
Santiam Correctional Institution, Salem OR	March 6, 2026
Snake River Correctional Institution, Ontario OR	April 7, 2026
Two Rivers Correctional Institution, Umatilla OR	May 12, 2026
Powder River Correctional Facility, Baker City OR	July 10, 2026
Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution, Pendleton OR	August 7, 2026
Oregon State Penitentiary, Salem OR	September 25, 2026
Oregon State Correctional Institution, Salem OR	November 6, 2026
Columbia River Correctional Institution, Portland, OR	December 4, 2026
Coffee Creek Correctional Facility - Medium, Wilsonville OR	June 17th, 2026
Coffee Creek Correctional Facility - Minimum, Wilsonville OR	June 18th, 2026

Support our Mission

There are multiple ways you can support our mission to find employment for justice-involved individuals through prison outreach, employer education, and business development services.

1. Bring in employment opportunities or community services by registering to attend career and resource fairs throughout the state of Oregon. [RESOURCE & CAREER FAIRS | Opportunity](#).
2. Commit to one-time, monthly or annual financial giving by [Donating to make a difference in your community](#). As a 501(c)(3) Non Profit, all donations and contributions are tax deductible.
3. Commit to volunteering at Opportunity Oregon by providing interview clothing donations, organizing spaces, helping in the office, attending our community and fundraising events. Email Reentry@opport-unity.org to coordinate.
4. Apply to join our board of directors. Email Info@opport-unity.org to coordinate.

